

Glencore sets up CFAC cleanup panel

By **RICHARD HANNERS** Hungry Horse News | Posted: Wednesday, May 20, 2015 8:43 am

Plans and timetables for clean up, site redevelopment and environmental monitoring at the Columbia Falls Aluminum Co. site were the goals expressed by a community liaison group at their May 14 organizational meeting.

Ann Green Communications, a public relations company based in South Charleston, W.Va., has been hired by CFAC's owner, Glencore, to disseminate information between the community and Glencore as the CFAC cleanup process moves forward.

Mary Green, who facilitated the meeting hosted by CFAC, said she made several trips to the Flathead in March and April to solicit recommendations for members of the CFAC Community Liaison Panel.

"I asked people who they thought should be on this panel," she said about the selection process.

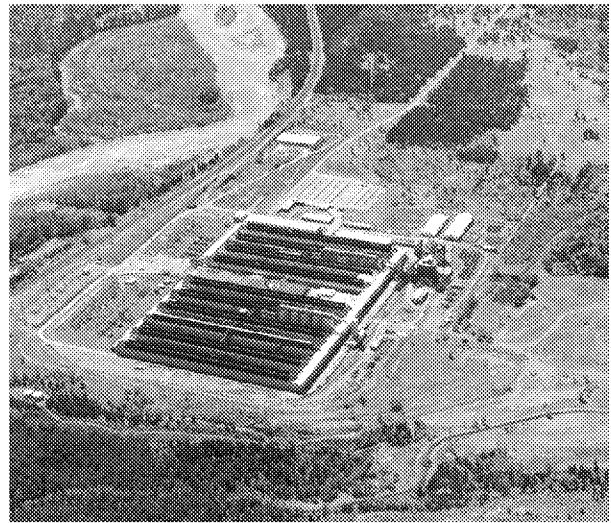
Among the chosen were Columbia Falls mayor

Don Barnhart, city manager Susan Nicosia and police chief Dave Perry; Flathead County Commissioner Phil Mitchell; Sen. Jon Tester field representatives Virginia Sloan and Chad Campbell; Rep. Ryan Zinke field representative John Fuller; Columbia Falls Area Chamber of Commerce president Stacey Schnebel; and Flathead County emergency planner Nikki Stephan.

Private citizens on the committee include Michael Nicosia, Nino Berube, Clarence Taber, Shannon Stringer, Ray Negron, Lyle Mitchell and Bev York. Erin Sexton, a research scientist at the University of Montana's Flathead Lake Biological Station, is also on the panel.

Glencore sent two people. Cheryl Driscoll is a senior vice president at CFAC's corporate headquarters in Stamford, Conn. John Stroiazzo is a project manager responsible for closing industrial sites for Xstrata, the giant mining company that merged with Glencore two years ago. Stroiazzo recently headed up site remediation at Xstrata's zinc and copper mine in Timmons, Ontario.

"I'm here to help (CFAC environmental manager) Steve Wright with the remedial investigation and demolition," he said.



Public relations firm selects members

The Columbia Falls Aluminum Co. smelter plant as seen from the air in April. The Flathead River is to the left, and the contaminated landfills are to the right.

Two people who were not invited to sit on the panel showed up at Freedom Bank on May 14 and got a seat — Sen. Dee Brown, R-Hungry Horse, and Rep. Zak Perry, D-Martin City. Two reporters sat in on the meeting as “guests” — they were not allowed to participate directly, but panel members said they wanted the meeting kept open to the public.

Green pointed out that having Driscoll and Stroiazzo there proved how serious Glencore was about the cleanup process.

“We are very fortunate that Cheryl is sitting here,” Green pointed out. “This is exceptional.”

Berube, a former CFAC engineer, asked what the community will get from the panel. He also wanted to know if Driscoll and Stroiazzo were decision makers.

Stringer, another former CFAC employee, pointed out that the last time Glencore sent someone from CFAC’s Connecticut office, it led to community distrust.

“I agree, the past you experienced was not good,” Driscoll replied. “I knew I had to come. I love Columbia Falls. I worked on the CFAC acquisition in 1998.”

“We know about the trust issues,” Green added.

Driscoll pointed out that Glencore has hired Roux Associates to develop a remedial investigation and feasibility study for cleaning up the CFAC site, Calbag Resources to begin demolition, and Ann Green Communications to improve relations with the public.

“I know there has been a lot of bad feelings about Glencore,” she said. “But a lot has changed at Glencore since the initial public offering (in 2011) and the merger with Xstrata (in 2013).”

Driscoll said Xstrata brought a lot of operational and engineering expertise to Glencore, which was primarily a commodities trading company.

“We can now be more proactive in dealing with the CFAC site,” she said.

Green noted that with so much interest in the panel, the June 11 meeting might be held at a larger venue.

“By that time, demolition will have started,” she pointed out, raising local concerns about increased traffic and dust.

Green asked for a serious commitment by panel members — the group could end up meeting once a month for several years.